

Surveying Your Residents

One way to determine the success of your recycling program is to survey your residents. A survey will allow you to find out how residents rate your program in terms of convenience, number and type of materials collected, education & outreach, and much more. In addition to serving as an assessment tool, a survey of the residents in your municipality will also serve as an educational tool. By surveying the households in your town, you will be reaching each recipient with the recycling message.

As an incentive for residents to participate, you may consider holding a prize drawing for those residents who complete the survey. A backyard compost bin, a new recycling bin, or a bag of finished compost are all good, inexpensive, recycling-related prizes.

Methods of Distributing your Survey

Verbal Survey at Recycling Center/Transfer Station

Perhaps the most economical method of administering a survey of your residents is to survey people verbally as they come to the recycling center or transfer station. You may not reach as many people as you could through other methods, but the only cost to your program would be the time of the employee(s) asking the questions. If you don't have the time or staff to administer the survey, consider asking local students to conduct the survey for you. They may be able to obtain school credit or public service hours for administering the survey and compiling a report on the results.

Phone Survey

Another economical method of surveying your residents is to call a portion of the households in your municipality. Unless your municipality is quite small, you probably will not want to call every household. Instead, you should consider telephoning a random sample of your residents. Since you will only be making local calls, the only cost to your program would be the time of the employee(s) asking the questions. Again, you may consider asking local students to conduct the survey if you cannot devote the staff time to the survey. One of the negative aspects of a telephone survey is the risk of disturbing people at home. It is up to you to determine whether a phone survey would be appropriate in your community.

Post Card Survey

One of the more expensive, but less time consuming methods of conducting your survey would be to send self-addressed stamped postcards to all of the households in your community. A postcard is also a good way to reach all of your residents in a manner that does not intrude on their privacy. The cost of this endeavor would include printing costs and postage. You may be able to have a local printer donate the cost of printing the cards or you may be able to have a business sponsor the printing. (Please see attached template.)

Newspaper Ad

Another possibility for conducting your survey is to run the survey as an ad in the local newspaper. Provide residents with instructions for completing and mailing in or dropping off the survey. The ad would require a relatively small, one-time fee regardless of the number of people that return the survey. (Please see attached template.)

*If you would like assistance developing education and outreach materials, please contact:
the State Planning Office at 1-800-662-4545 or via e-mail at shannon.haines@state.me.us*

Sample Survey Questions

(to Determine Residential Recycling Behavior)

Do you recycle more than you did two years ago? Yes No

Please rate the convenience of your recycling program:

1	2	3	4	5
Extremely Convenient				Not at all Convenient

Please rate your satisfaction with the number of materials accepted in your program:

1	2	3	4	5
Extremely Satisfied				Not at all Satisfied

How well informed are you about:

Very well

Not at all

What materials you can recycle	1	2	3	4	5
How to prepare materials	1	2	3	4	5
What happens to your recyclables	1	2	3	4	5
The benefits of recycling	1	2	3	4	5

How do you get your information regarding the recycling program?

Newspaper

Town Newsletter

Facility Operator

Word-of-mouth

Other _____

Please rate your overall satisfaction with the current recycling program:

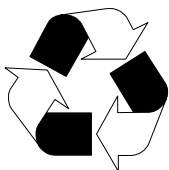
1	2	3	4	5
Extremely Satisfied				Not at all Satisfied

What suggestions do you have for improving the recycling program?

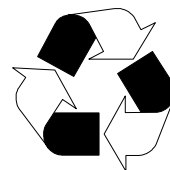
You may also consider adding questions related to buying products with recycled content, waste reduction, backyard composting, and other areas of interest. For example: How often do you look for products with recycled content?; Do you compost in your backyard?; When you go to the super-market, do you look for items that are minimally packaged?; etc.

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Newspaper Ad Survey Template



How Does Recycling Rank In (Insert Municipality Name)?



Fill out the following survey and qualify to win a prize!!

1. Do you recycle more than you did 2 years ago? (circle one) Yes No
2. Please rate the convenience of the recycling program on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = extremely convenient; 5 = not convenient at all): _____
3. Please rate your satisfaction with the number of materials accepted in the program on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = extremely satisfied; 5 = not satisfied at all): _____
4. On a scale of 1 to 5, please rank how well informed you are about the following issues (1 = very well informed; 5 = not at all):
What materials you can recycle: _____
How to prepare materials: _____
What happens to recyclables: _____
The benefits of recycling: _____
5. How do you get your information regarding the recycling program (circle all that apply): Newsletter Newspaper Facility Operator Word of Mouth
Other: _____
6. Do you have any suggestions for improving the recycling program?

Please return your completed survey to the following address and you will enter yourself into a drawing for great prizes:

(Insert Address/Location here)

Postcard Survey Template

The following is a template for a 3" x 5" postcard survey. If you want to include more information, you may want to use a 4" x 6" postcard. Be sure to check with the post office if you are designing a custom sized postcard.

How Does Recycling Rank In (Insert Municipality Name)?

1. Do you recycle more than you did 2 years ago? (circle one) Yes No
2. Please rate the convenience of the recycling program on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = extremely convenient; 5 = not convenient at all): _____
3. Please rate your satisfaction with the number of materials accepted in the program on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = extremely satisfied; 5 = not satisfied at all): _____
4. On a scale of 1 to 5, please rank how well informed you are about the following issues (1 = very well informed; 5 = not at all):
What materials you can recycle: _____ How to prepare materials: _____
What happens to recyclables: _____ The benefits of recycling: _____
5. How do you get your information regarding the recycling program (circle all that apply):
Newsletter Newspaper Facility Operator
Word of Mouth Other: _____

Postage

[Your Name and Address]

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